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ABSTRACT

Two statewide Montana projects address educational needs assessed through a biennial Comprehensive System of Personnel Development survey. Although addressing different needs, the projects use similar strategies for effective implementation in a large rural state. Montana Training for Inclusive Education is a program of inservice training, technical assistance, and peer coaching activities designed to increase opportunities for students with disabilities to be served in general education classrooms. Teams from 18 local education agencies were trained in cooperative learning, inclusion, team building, collaboration, and peer coaching. Each team included a regular and a special education teacher, an administrator, someone from related services, a paraprofessional, and a parent. Teams were active for 2 years: the training period, which included five teleconferences, and the implementation year. Regional consultants provided inservice training and technical assistance. Evaluations have resulted in training modifications and a change to nine teams. The Montana Behavioral Initiative is a staff development venture created to improve the ability of school and community services personnel to meet the emotional and behavioral needs of students. Five community-school partnerships consisted of educators, parents, and community representatives. These model sites enabled each community to address its own needs while creating a framework for intervention that can be used in other communities. The teams trained under nationally known experts, received ongoing technical assistance from regional consultants, shared information with other schools, and conducted ongoing project evaluation. Both programs stress site-specific needs assessment and team goal setting. Includes program evaluation forms. (TD)

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MONTANA TRAINING FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION (TIE) AND MONTANA BEHAVIORAL INITIATIVE (MBI): DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION OF TWO RURAL EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Introduction

Montana is a large rural state. Fourth in size, it is 44th in population. The largest metropolitan area in the state is Billings with a population of under 90,000 people. As a result of the 1990 census, the state lost one of its two representatives to Congress. Because of vast rural stretches, sparse population, and remote rural schools, Montana's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Council (CSPD) is very active. To meet the professional development needs of isolated special education teachers and related services personnel, the state CSPD council regionalized beginning in December, 1993. By assessing personnel development needs in each of five special education regions, the state council can better provide continuing education and training specific to regional concerns. Two CSPD projects, however, are statewide. The Montana TIE project was proposed to address the need for inclusion information and training. MBI is an attempt to support educators as they work with increasing numbers of students with behavioral disorders. Both projects address overall state priorities for personnel development as assessed through the biennial CSPD survey, but both depend upon regionally based consultation.

Montana Training for Inclusive Education

Montana Training for Inclusive Education (TIE) is a program of inservice training, technical assistance, and peer coaching activities to increase opportunities for students with disabilities to be served in general education classrooms. Over a five-year funding period, local education agency teams are being trained in strategies for cooperative learning and inclusion, and techniques for team-building, collaboration, and peer coaching. The teams receive technical assistance as they implement training at their individual sites. Each team includes six people: regular and special education teachers, an administrator, a member from related services, a paraprofessional, and a parent. Working together, these individuals form an effective and supportive system for initiating inclusive education to the extent appropriate to meet the needs of an individual student with disabilities.

Unique features of this project include regional trainers/consultants, local site teams, and peer coaches. Regional trainers/consultants provide a cost-effective rural service delivery model for inservice training and technical assistance. The regional consultant model ensures locally relevant service delivery to address diverse needs in a large, rural state. Training of local teams develops commitment, cooperation, and collaboration among the individuals who are key to effective integration of students with disabilities into regular classrooms. Peer coaches create a mechanism for supporting the changes required for an inclusive education approach at the local site following training.

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The project began three years ago with eighteen teams. The teams came together in January of 1994 for initial information and training. Following a three day retreat, the teams returned to their sites to develop site specific goals and objectives. Throughout the spring, teams participated in five teleconferences over the state's MetNet system. Two days were devoted to inclusion strategies, and three were devoted to collaboration, peer coaching, and conflict resolution. MetNet presentations were a collaborative effort by faculty from both the University of Montana and Montana State University-Billings. After completing a year of application and training, teams were ready to implement TIE at their sites. Each local team was supported by a regional inclusion consultant, on-call as needed for additional training, concept clarification, or troubleshooting.

The initial team retreat and each MetNet training session were evaluated through a Likert type rating and participant comments (Figure 1). Subsequent training modifications have been based on evaluation results. During the first year of implementation, teams maintained logs of team activity (Figure 2) and selected a student to serve as a TIE case study (Figure 3). Through these evaluation efforts, it became apparent that 18 teams were too many to manage for everyone involved--project coordinator, inclusion consultants, and project evaluators. As a result, the second and third project tiers have been limited to nine teams, each. Teams remain actively involved in the project for two years, the training period and initial implementation year. Future evaluation will survey teams after two years of implementation to determine if inclusion efforts continue beyond active project involvement.

The Montana Behavioral Initiative

The Montana Behavioral Initiative is a comprehensive staff development venture created to improve the capacities of schools and communities to meet the diverse and increasingly complex social, emotional and behavioral needs of students. The initiative assists educators and community services personnel to develop the attitudes, skills and systems necessary to help each student leave public education with the social competence needed to succeed in society and the workplace. An essential component of MBI is the development of model community sites to provide educators and social service providers validated strategies for responding to challenging behaviors proactively. Through the implementation of the model sites, schools work in coordination with the Juvenile Justice system and other community social agencies to extend the range and quality of services available to youth to help them achieve the positive social, emotional and behavioral skills necessary for life success. The program emphasizes recognizing responsibility, problem solving, and ongoing dialogue among agencies and juveniles in need of assistance. The model community/school sites provide the opportunity for each community to address its own specific needs while creating a framework for intervention that can be disseminated to and replicated in other communities.

The Montana Behavioral Initiative Task Force was formed in the Fall of 1994. Founded to provide child-care professionals assistance, through training and collaboration, in serving youth with challenging social, emotional, and behavioral needs, the group meets regularly throughout the year. It was the Task Force that initiated the Montana Behavioral Initiative project, organized two summer MBI Institutes, solicited applicants for model sites, coordinated activities of regional behavioral consultants, and continues to oversee project implementation.

Five community/school partnerships were selected in the spring of 1995. Located throughout Montana, each site selected teams of educators, parents, and community representatives. Model site teams require more than school personnel, so that an integrated approach is taken to meeting student needs. The original site teams came together for a retreat, the first MBI Institute during the summer 1995 and were trained by nationally known leaders in the field of emotional/behavioral disabilities. The teams surveyed their sites to determine site specific needs, and developed goals to address them.

Components of the Montana Behavioral Initiative that are viewed as essential for project success include the summer Institute, team training by nationally known experts, the Task Force as an advisory council, ongoing technical assistance by regional behavioral consultants, information sharing by sites with other schools, and ongoing project evaluation.

Initial evaluation efforts focused on Institute evaluation, and qualitative data from project sites. The Institute evaluations were similar to TIE MetNet evaluation. Numerical results were subjected to computerized data analyses and participant comments were summarized. Each site kept a team log (Figure 2) and selected a student as a case study (Figure 3). Because the MBI Task Force has requested a quantitative approach, the evaluation format has been entirely revised.

Current and Future Evaluation of Both TIE and MBI

Evaluation strategies for both projects have been similar. The projects have both been grant funded and the grants specified the following evaluation components.

Formative evaluation:

- Training workshop evaluations;
- Documentation of team meetings;
- Team/individual journals of activity; and
- Ongoing case study of one student at each project site.

Summative evaluation:

- Pre/post attitude surveys;
- Pre/post data on number an amount of time for included students (TIE) or number and severity of behavioral referrals (MBI);
- Implementation of project training at sites; and
- Impact of project activity on case study student progress.

Using this format, three TIE reports have been completed and two MBI reports. It has been very difficult to collect the team logs. Some teams maintained the logs naturally; for others journalling was difficult and time consuming. Consequently, the pictures gained of team progress varied to the extreme. In addition, the case study was an obstacle to team progress, rather than documentation of team success. Students tend to move in and out of schools so maintaining one student for a case study became impossible. The result of less than satisfactory documentation through qualitative data sources has been revision of both TIE and MBI evaluation.

The revised evaluation package is composed of a list of potential data sources, and simplified forms for collecting/reporting results (Figure 4). For the TIE project, two surveys may be used--a Questionnaire on Inclusion and a Questionnaire on Collaboration. For MBI the site survey addresses student, staff and community perceptions of school safety. Based on survey results (Figure 5), each site is to determine site-specific goals and objectives (Figure 6). Progress on goals will be determined using a form by TIE teams that documents increased student inclusion (Figure 7) or a form by MBI teams that documents decreased numbers of office disciplinary referrals.

Information dissemination with regard to both projects will be in the form of site brochures (Figure 8). For a TIE site, the brochure will highlight needs assessment, resulting goals and objectives, amount of time students with disabilities are included in regular education classrooms and types of disabilities included. For MBI teams, the brochure will document changes in public perception of school site safety, site goals, and a decrease in numbers and severity of office disciplinary referrals.

Summary

Montana Training for Inclusive Education and the Montana Behavioral Initiative are two state-wide projects that were initiated to address educational needs as assessed through a biennial Comprehensive System of Personnel Development survey. Although the projects address very different needs, they use similar strategies in order for effective implementation in a large, rural state. Both bring teams together initially for intra-team building and inter-team networking. Both regionalize teams and use regional consultants for ongoing team support and technical assistance. Both stress site specific needs assessment and team goal setting. Both employ external evaluators in order to document overall project efficacy in terms of individual site progress.

References

Montana Office of Public Instruction. (1993). The Montana training for inclusive education (TIE) project. Unpublished Grant Proposal submitted to the U.S. Department of Education.

Montana Behavioral Initiative Task Force. (1995). The Montana behavioral initiative (MBI) community model site project. Unpublished Grant Proposal submitted to the Montana Board of Crime Control.

METNET PRESENTATION

TOPIC:_____

DATE:_____

	Excellent				Poor
The organization of the workshop was	5	4	3	2	1
The work of the presenter(s) was	5	4	3	2	1
The information presented was	5	4	3	2	1
The location of the workshop was	5	4	3	2	1
The METNET presentation was	5	4	3	2	1
As compared to an on-site workshop, this was	5	4	3	2	1

The stronger features of the workshop were

_____

_____

_____

The weaker features of the workshop were

_____

_____

_____

The benefits of this METNET experience were

_____

_____

_____

The drawbacks of this METNET experience were

_____

_____

_____

TIE SCHOOL _____

TEAM MEMBER _____

Figure 1. TIE MetNet Evaluation Form

The Team Log is an ongoing record of team/individual activity. Records should be kept for each team meeting. Individual team members are encouraged to maintain individual logged reflections of project involvement. The log should be kept in a three-ring binder, tabbed monthly. Duplicate the log every three months and forward the copy to us at MSU-Billings. In addition, send any general school information such as the student handbook, administrative reports, school improvement goals, etc.

TEAM LOG

DATE: ____ _____ **SITE:** _____

TEAM MEMBER(S): _____

_____

Figure 2. TIE/MBI Team Log Form

STUDENT CASE STUDY

The student case study may include, but is not limited to the following information.

Individual Student ID Information

- Name
- Age
- Gender

Pertinent Background Information

- Family Composition
- Ethnic/Cultural Background
- Medical History
- Educational History

Current Educational Information

- Grade Level
- Achievement Level(s)
- Type of Class Placement
- Social Competence

Figure 3. TIE/MBI Student Case Study Form

POTENTIAL DATA SOURCES FOR DEMONSTRATING TIE BASED CHANGE

Initial Survey Results

- Staff Questionnaire on Inclusion
- Staff Questionnaire on Collaboration

School Goals Based on Survey Results

- One goal for each problem area

Strategies Toward Meeting Each Goal

- Two strategies for each goal

Numbers/Hours of Student Inclusion/Staff Collaboration

- Numbers of students included and hours annually for the past 3 school years
- Numbers of students included and hours for the first 2 years following TIE training
- Numbers of staff collaborating and hours annually for the past 3 school years
- Numbers of staff collaborating and hours for the first 2 years following TIE training

Observations

- Within a school site
- Between school sites

Two-year Follow-up Survey Results

- Staff Questionnaire on Inclusion
- Staff Questionnaire on Collaboration

Figure 4. TIE Revised Evaluation Packet

SURVEY RESULTS REPORT

_____ **Initial** _____ **Date**

_____ **Two Year Follow-up** _____ **Date**

QUESTIONNAIRE ON INCLUSION

- Staff Mean _____

QUESTIONNAIRE ON COLLABORATION

- Staff Mean _____

Figure 5. TIE Survey Results Report

SITE GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

_____ Initial _____ Date

_____ Two Year Follow-up _____ Date

GOAL 1

_____

_____

Strategy 1.1 _____

_____

Strategy 1.2 _____

_____

GOAL 2

_____

_____

Strategy 2.1 _____

_____

Strategy 2.2 _____

_____

GOAL 3

_____

_____

Strategy 3.1 _____

_____

Strategy 3.2 _____

_____

GOAL 4

_____

_____

Strategy 4.1 _____

_____

Strategy 4.2 _____

_____

GOAL 5

_____

_____

Strategy 5.1 _____

_____

Strategy 5.2 _____

_____

Figure 6. TIE/MBI Site Goals and Implementation Strategies

INCLUSION/COLLABORATION REPORT

_____ Initial _____ Date

_____ Two Year Follow-up _____ Date

PRE TIE TRAINING			
	Number of Students Included and Total Hours	Type(s) of Disabilities	Number of Staff Collaborating and Total Hours
Year			
Year			
Year			
POST TIE IMPLEMENTATION			
	Number of Students Included and Total Hours	Type(s) of Disabilities	Number of Staff Collaborating and Total Hours
Year			
Year			

Figure 7. TIE Inclusion/Collaboration Report

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ALL ABOUT MBI

The Montana Behavioral Initiative

MBI

Spotlights

ALL ABOUT (SITE NAME)

(SITE NAME)

MBI Evaluation
College of Education & Human Services
Montana State University-Billings
1500 North 30 St.
Billings, MT 59101

Figure 8. MBI Proposed Brochure

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SITE SURVEY RESULTS

PRE MBI

Staff

- Treatment from staff
- Treatment from students
- Safety

Students

- Treatment from staff
- Treatment from students
- Safety

Teacher Contact with Agencies

POST MBI

Staff

- Treatment from staff
- Treatment from students
- Safety

Students

- Treatment from staff
- Treatment from students
- Safety

Teacher Contact with Agencies

SCHOOL GOALS

GOAL 1

- Strategy 1.1
- Strategy 1.2

GOAL 2

- Strategy 2.1
- Strategy 2.2

GOAL 3

- Strategy 3.1
- Strategy 3.2

GOAL 4

- Strategy 4.1
- Strategy 4.2

GOAL 5

- Strategy 5.1
- Strategy 5.2

OFFICE REFERRAL REPORT

PRE MBI

Common area(s) for referrals

- Year 1
- Year 2

Types of behaviors

- Year 1
- Year 2

Staff making referrals

- Year 1
- Year 2

POST MBI

Common area(s) for referrals

-

Types of behaviors

-

Staff making referrals

-

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